

**Virginia Cave Board
Saturday, March 24, 2007
Grand Caverns, Grottoes, Virginia**

Virginia Cave Board Members Present

Mr. Tom Lera, Chairman
Dr. John R. Holsinger
Ms. Babs Melton
Ms. Barbara L. Moss
Mr. David Socky

Virginia Cave Board Members Not Present

Ms Andrea Futrell, Vice Chairman
Dr. David C. Culver
Mr. Andrew Harrison
Ms. Judy Molnar
Mr. Jesse Richardson
Ms. Claire Ward
Virginia Department of Historical Resources representative

DCR Staff Present

Mr. Joey Fagan
Mr. Larry Smith
Mr. Wil Orndorff

Others Present

Mr. Robert Barns

Call to Order

Mr. Tom Lera called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and declared that a quorum was not present.

Introduction and Announcements

Mr. Lera welcomed members, staff, and guests.

Minutes from January 20, 2006

Those present were given an opportunity to offer corrections and additions to the draft minutes.

Treasury Report

Mr. Larry Smith reported \$1869.99 is in the Cave Board treasury.

Old Business

Education and Outreach Committee

Members of the Education and Outreach Committee made a short field trip to visit the new hands-on educational facilities that are being constructed outside Grand Caverns. The facilities, scheduled to open on April 30, 2007, will focus on teaching about the biology of the moving water in nearby South River; the cycles of life, and water chemistry.

Ms. Babs Melton announced that Crystal Caverns would host a Project Underground Facilitators Training Workshop to be conducted by Ms. Carol Zokaites on March 29 and 30, 2007. It is projected for the workshop to have 18 participants.

Ms. Barbara Moss reported that the Cave Owners Newsletter is almost ready to be published. She circulated a draft copy of the upcoming issue to those present. Board members and staff present discussed the newsletter article entitled Conservation Easements. It was agreed that that article will not appear in the newsletter and will be replaced with material contained in a recent Department of Conservation brochure called Land Conservation in Virginia. It was also agreed that the newsletter following this one will contain the material in the DCR brochure Tax Benefits of Land Conservation in Virginia. Address corrections from a recent postcard mailing are being processed and the newsletter will soon be distributed to those on the updated list of Virginia cave owners.

Mr. Andrew Harrison reported by telephone that the Richmond Area Speleological Society (RASS) has approved a \$1000 grant to be applied toward the cost of publishing and distributing the Cave Owners Newsletter. Additional grant funding will be sought to help defray the cost of publishing the newsletter.

The next Virginia Cave Week will be observed from April 20 to 26, 2008 during Earth Day week (Earth Day is held on April 22 every year). Handouts and internet resources will be developed and updated.

Joint Technical Committee

Mr. David Socky reported that a letter has been sent to the DCR Stormwater Technical Advisory Committee expressing the Cave Board position regarding the proposed revisions to Virginia's stormwater regulations and suggesting ways to better protect the Commonwealth's sensitive cave and karst resources. Cave Board members are continuing to follow the revision process; and making an effort to attend the meetings of the DCR Stormwater TAC.

Mr. Wil Orndorff reported on recently documented vandalism in Rocky Hollow Cave in Wise County. Additional information about the incident is presented in the Karst Program Report elsewhere in the minutes. Photos were presented showing the breach in the cave's gate as well as sections of the cave that were defaced by spray-paint. Such activities are prohibited by the Virginia Cave Protection Act. Mr. Socky noted the Board would report the incident to the Wise County Sheriff's Department.

The Technical Committee recommends that the Cave Board plan a public education and outreach event at Natural Tunnel State Park to take place the evening of Saturday, September 22, 2007, in conjunction with the Board's next meeting.

Virginia DCR Natural Heritage Karst Program and Karst Education Report

Mr. Orndorff circulated a written report on the activities of the DCR Karst Program from January 20 through March 24, 2007 to the Board:

Staff continued to work on conservation site development for significant caves, completing boundary designs and descriptions for sites in Shenandoah, Rockbridge, and Rockingham counties.

Staff led a two-day sampling excursion in search of more Madison Cave Isopod populations in the Lexington area. As part of the trip, the highly degraded state of the stream in Cave Spring cave was noted. The owner states that he had been working with the local government to address the source of the contamination, which appears to be settling pond from a water treatment plant. Staff will be working with the landowner and local government to verify this connection and to come up with a satisfactory solution. The only place in the cave where aquatic life was observed was in an upstream tributary, where specimens of *Stygobromus barodyi* were collected.

On February 21-23, staff assisted VDGIF (Department of Game and Inland Fisheries) staff on the biennial bat counts in Gap Cave (Saltpetre Well entrance, Lee County), Grassy Springs Cave (Lee County), and Rocky Hollow Cave (Wise County). Indiana Bat numbers in both Gap and Grassy Springs are down to record lows, around 100 in each cave. There is no obvious culprit on which to blame the reduced numbers. The bat population in Rocky Hollow appears stable. The cave gate, however, was found to have been breached by digging and the upper sections of the cave had been vandalized with spray-paint. Staff photo-documented the damage and de-rigged the cave to prevent access to the lower levels. The situation is complicated by the uncertain status of

ownership of the cave, the entrance to which lies along a cliff on the west face of Powell Mountain. Don Gowan of the Nature Conservancy has been leading efforts to establish ownership of the cave by an appropriate land steward. This situation has been taken before the Cave Board technical committee.

Staff attended the National Park Service Eastern Rivers Summit in Shepherdstown from 28 Feb to 2 March, presenting a talk on the importance of performing inventory work for stygobitic and cave fauna in the park system, using examples from Cumberland Gap National Historic Park, Shenandoah National Park, Harpers Ferry NHP, and Antietam National Park.

A Rye Cove cave exploration event was held the first week of March, hosted at Natural Tunnel State Park. Fifteen participants, mostly Virginia Tech Cave Club students on spring break, mapped several thousand feet of cave in the Rye Cove area and assisted in hydrological studies. The subsurface hydrologic patterns are becoming better understood and subsurface drainage is much more complicated than first imagined. Staff gave a presentation to the local community highlighting discoveries made in the last 10 years regarding the caves, hydrology, and cave fauna of the area. Sixteen local residents were in attendance, and remained for over an hour after the meeting to discuss hydrological theories and disclose locations of caves that the exploration community may not have known about. Finally, a trip was made during this week to monitor the status of the Lee County Cave Isopod, *Lirceus usdagalun*, populations in Lee County. Large numbers of the isopod were present at each cave location, and water quality measurements were good at all locations, with high dissolved oxygen and low turbidity being the most important parameters.

Revision of the Virginia Natural Heritage Program *Karst Resources* fact sheet series is nearing completion. The four fact sheets cover the caves and karst of the Shenandoah/Potomac, Upper James and Roanoke, New, and Upper Tennessee River basins. Draft copies of the fact sheets were distributed to those in attendance.

Staff is working with adjacent landowners to the Ogden's Cave property in Frederick County to pursue installation of best management practices to exclude cattle from the stream feeding Ogden's Cave, and to consider placement of a perpetual conservation easement on the property. Virginia Outdoors Foundation and Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District staff are partnering with the karst program on this project.

Dana Roberts from the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District office held a Project Underground workshop in February in Richmond.

The karst education coordinator is partnering with school divisions to apply for "Learn and Serve" grants in karst areas and is adding "Learn and Serve" information to the Bay Academy.

Significant time was spent preparing for upcoming education and outreach events in the next month, which include a 2-day facilitator training with Cave Board Member Babs

Melton at Crystal Caverns, two Project Underground teacher workshops, and one Project Learning Tree workshop.

Mr. Orndorff made a short presentation to those present detailing recent fieldwork in the Rye Cove Karst in Scott County.

Cave Board Webpage

Ms. Barbara Moss is coordinating efforts to update the Cave Board Webpage. Mr. Fagan reported that all Cave Board Minutes since 2002 are currently posted on the site. Ms. Megan Rollins of the DCR Heritage Program serves as Webmaster for the Board's website.

New Business

No business requiring a vote was conducted due to the lack of a quorum.

Strategic Planning and Weekend Retreat

Mr. Tom Lera discussed strategic planning and asked what role the Cave Board should play in advocating for the protection of cave and karst resources. Mr. Lera noted the powers and duties of the Cave Board as defined by the Virginia Cave Protection Act. Plans for the next Cave Board Meeting on September 22, 2007 were discussed along with the weekend retreat to be held September 21 to 23, 2007 at Natural Tunnel State Park.

Letters of Support

The Cave Board will send a letter to the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation and to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, expressing support for TNC's funding proposal for the purchase of the Surgener-Gallohan Cave system in Lee County, Virginia.

The Board will write a letter expressing support for efforts by West Virginia to allow the withholding of site-specific data about caves.

Other New Business

Mr. Larry Smith asked for suggestions of names of persons who might like to serve on the Cave Board.

Mr. Socky announced that the Virginia Speleological Survey (VSS) has accepted the donation of the entrance of Crossroads Cave. The cave will remain open to cavers.

Public comments

On May 07-10, 2008, the Second Appalachian Karst Symposium will be held at East Tennessee University in Johnson City, Tennessee (www.etsu.edu/physics/appkarst).

The “Growing Communities on Karst” workshop near Winchester Virginia, originally scheduled for May 23, 2007, is being postponed until a yet to be determined future date (www.uap.vt.edu/karst/index.htm).

Thanks to Grand Caverns for Hosting

Mr. Lera expressed thanks, on behalf of the Virginia Cave Board, to Grand Caverns and the Upper Valley Regional Parks Authority for hosting this meeting of the Board

Dates for Future Cave Board Activities

- Planning Retreat: September 21–23, 2007 and Board meeting on September 22 at Natural Tunnel State Park, Duffield, Virginia.
- Meeting: November 3, 2007 at Luray Caverns, Luray, Virginia

Adjournment

Mr. Lera adjourned the meeting at 3:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Lera
Board Chairman

Joseph H. Fagan
Secretary